

OCTOBER 25, 1976

THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM

ANCHOR: VOA NEWS ANALYST JOSEPH SULLIVAN HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS ON VIETNAM'S ACCEPTANCE OF A UNITED STATES PROPOSAL TO BEGIN TALKS AIMED AT IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

VOICE: HANOI'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL WAS ANNOUNCED SUNDAY (OCTOBER 24) BY SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER AFTER A NATIONAL TELEVISION INTERVIEW. WHILE DOCTOR KISSINGER GAVE NO FURTHER DETAILS, THE STATE DEPARTMENT LATER ISSUED A STATEMENT EMPHASIZING THAT A COMPLETE ACCOUNTING OF AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION IN THE VIETNAM WAR IS AN ABSOLUTE PRECONDITION OF ANY IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. AND, IN PARIS, VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS CONFIRMED THAT HANOI HAD ACCEPTED THE U.S. CALL FOR TALKS TO, IN THEIR WORDS, "EXCHANGE VIEWS ON PROBLEMS OF INTEREST TO EACH SIDE."

THE ANNOUNCEMENT ENDS SEVERAL MONTHS OF EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE HOLDING OF TALKS TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES LEFT OVER FROM THE VIETNAM WAR. THE QUESTION OF THE MISSING AMERICAN SERVICEMEN -- SOME SEVEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE IN ALL OF INDOCHINA AND FIVE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE IN VIETNAM -- HAS BEEN A MAJOR STICKING POINT. WASHINGTON'S CONDITIONS FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE HANOI GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN CLEARLY DEFINED. U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD VIETNAM WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT'S CONDUCT TOWARD THE UNITED STATES -- PARTICULARLY ON THE QUESTION OF THE RETURN OF REMAINS OF AMERICANS KILLED IN VIETNAM OR INFORMATION ABOUT THEM. THEY HAVE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PREPARED TO RECIPROCATE GESTURES OF GOODWILL FROM HANOI.

HANOI, FOR ITS PART, HAS SAID THAT IT WAS READY TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT SUCH TALKS COULD INCLUDE DISCUSSION OF

ARTICLE EIGHT OF THE PARIS ACCORD ON VIETNAM. THAT ARTICLE REFERS TO THE QUESTION OF SEARCHING FOR THE AMERICANS MISSING IN ACTION IN INDOCHINA AND THE LOCATION AND REPATRIATION OF THE REMAINS OF U.S. TROOPS. (OPT) IN SEPTEMBER, VIETNAM PROVIDED THE UNITED STATES WITH THE NAMES OF TWELVE AIRMEN WHO WERE LISTED AS MISSING BUT WHO HANOI SAYS NOW WERE KILLED. (END OPT)

BUT HANOI HAS HERETOFORE SET PRE-CONDITIONS FOR TALKS WITH AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES, ONE OF WHICH IS THAT THE UNITED STATES PROVIDE VIETNAM WITH RECONSTRUCTION AID, WHICH IT SAYS THE UNITED STATES PLEDGED AS A SIGNATORY TO THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT. WASHINGTON'S POSITION IS THAT THE PARIS ACCORD BECAME, IN A SENSE, INOPERATIVE WITH THE MASSIVE VIOLATIONS OF ITS MOST BASIC PROVISIONS BY THE COMMUNIST SIDE, MAINLY THE INVASION OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE MILITARY TAKEOVER OF SAIGON. AT THE SAME TIME, THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERS THERE IS NO LINK BETWEEN THE "MISSING-IN-ACTION" ISSUE AND THE AID QUESTION.

OBSERVERS HAVE ALREADY NOTED THE TIMING OF VIETNAM'S ACCEPTANCE TO SIT DOWN WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVES, COMING AS IT DOES JUST A WEEK BEFORE THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE VIETNAM QUESTION, HOWEVER, HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. INDEED, EARLIER THIS MONTH DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER WAS QUICK TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE FULLY AGREED WITH PRESIDENT FORD'S DECISION TO VETO VIETNAM'S APPLICATION FOR UNITED NATIONS MEMBERSHIP IF THE APPLICATION CAME UP FOR VOTE AND IT'S EXPECTED THAT THE LATEST INITIATIVE TO GET TALKS MOVING WITH THE HANOI GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE THE SAME NON-PARTISAN SUPPORT.